PARASOCIAL INTERACTION ON SOCIAL MEDIA: HOW SOURCE IDENTIFICATION AFFECTS BRAND TRUST

A Thesis

presented to

the Faculty of the Graduate School

at the University of Missouri-Columbia

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

---

by

CAROLINE MURRAY

Dr. Shelly Rodgers, Thesis Supervisor

MAY 2015

The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the thesis entitled

PARASOCIAL INTERACTION ON SOCIAL MEDIA:
HOW SOURCE IDENTIFICATION AFFECTS BRAND TRUST

presented by Caroline Murray,

a candidate for the degree of master of the arts,

and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

Professor Shelly Rodgers

Professor Glen Cameron

Professor Sungkyoung Lee

Professor Joel Poor

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are many thanks in order for the completion of this thesis and of my master's degree. As the adage goes, it takes a village, and that certainly rang true over this past semester of thesis work and the past two years of my journey at the Missouri School of Journalism.

I would like to Dr. Shelly Rodgers for serving as an outstanding chair of my committee and for providing invaluable advice and insight. Without her guidance and expertise, I would have been completely lost.

I would next like to thank Dr. Glen Cameron for serving as the methodologist of my committee, as well as for being an outstanding teacher. In his strategic conflict management course, he taught to me to question the way I see the world of communications and to never be afraid of answering a question with, "It depends."

I would also like to thank Dr. Sungkyoung Lee and Dr. Joel Poor for serving as members of my committee. Their input and expertise greatly strengthened my work and positively impacted this thesis and my research experience.

Additionally, I would like to thank Dr. Tim Vos, who served as professor of my thesis seminar, for his support as I worked to develop my thesis proposal. I would not have made it to this point without his consolation during the panic in the semester leading up to this implementation of this thesis.

Lastly, I would like to thank each of the professors and fellow students I worked with during my time at the Missouri School of Journalism. From my first semester of science reporting to my last in public relations, each individual has made me think differently and more critically, and for that, I am forever grateful.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ii

LIST OF TABLES v

ABSTRACT vi

Chapter

1. INTRODUCTION 1
2. LITERATURE REVIEW 6
   - Parasocial Interaction 6
   - Defining Brands 9
   - Social Media 10
   - CEOs as Spokespeople 14
   - Brand Trust 16
   - Connecting Parasocial Interaction to Brand Trust 18
3. METHODS 20
   - Participants 21
   - Variables 23
   - Stimulus Materials 27
   - Procedure 27
   - Data Analysis 29
4. RESULTS 31
   - Data Preparation 31
   - Variable Indices 31
   - Hypothesis Testing 31

Additional Testing....33

5. DISCUSSION....35

Practical Implications....40

Limitations and Opportunities for Future Research....42

6. CONCLUSION....44

7. REFERENCES....45

APPENDIX

A. STIMULUS MATERIALS....49

B. SURVEY INSTRUMENT....52

C. RESULTS....57

LIST OF TABLES

Figure Page

1. Response distribution across treatment groups 21
2. Significance tests, social media network on dependent variables 57
3. Mean brand trust in social media networks 57
4. Significance tests, source type on dependent variables 57
5. Mean dependent variable results by source type 57
6. Correlation between brand trust and parasocial interaction 58
7. Significance tests, with control variables 58
8. Tests of correlation with control variables 59
9. Tukey post-hoc analyses, brand trust in social media networks 59

PARASOCIAL INTERACTION ON SOCIAL MEDIA:
HOW SOURCE IDENTIFICATION AFFECTS BRAND TRUST

Caroline Murray

Dr. Shelly Rodgers, Thesis Supervisor

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of source identification on parasocial interaction and brand trust on social media by comparing perceptions of marketer-generated social media content from brand accounts with no identified author to content from the accounts of the brand's CEO. Guided by the theory of parasocial interaction, the study used a 2 (identity) x 3 (social media channel) mixed factorial experiment. Identity was a within-subjects factor and social media channel was a between-subjects factor.

This quantitative online survey experiment of 104 university student participants found that, while there was a significant positive correlation between parasocial interaction and brand trust, $r(204)=0.581$, $p<0.001$, and a significant difference between levels of parasocial interaction and brand trust between the two source types, $F(1, 208)=8.976$, $p=0.003$ and $F(1, 208)=7.27$, $p=0.008$, higher levels of parasocial interaction and brand trust were perceived in the content from the brand account with no identified author,($M=25.615$, $SD=5.885$), than from the CEO, ($M=23.612$, $SD=6.059$). This result is opposite of what was predicted based on a review of the literature: that the content from the CEO's account would have higher levels of brand trust and parasocial interaction. The findings of this study can inform practical decisions on using CEOs in social media marketing.

Introduction

In October of 2014, the social media network Instagram had 200 million monthly active users (Instagram, 2014), Twitter had 270 million active users (Twitter, 2014) and Facebook had 1.23 billion users worldwide (Kiss, 2014). According to the Pew Research Internet Project (2014), 74% of online adults in the U.S. were using social networking sites as of January 2014, and 42% were using multiple social networking sites as of September 2013 (Pew Research Internet Project, 2013).

With so many consumers using social media, advertising executives and brand managers continue to pursue strategies that seek to make their brands a natural part of consumer conversations, rather than interruptions as in the case of traditional advertisements (Vernuccio, 2014). Recent social media failures have left perhaps more questions than answers for brand managers who may be considering appropriate use of social media or best practices for brands that appear in consumer conversations on social media. On September 11, 2014, many brand managers used social media accounts to express their condolences, even if those social media posts had little or nothing to do with their products or brand image. Brands like Dunkin' Donuts and Huggies used the anniversary of the tragic terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 as a marketing opportunity, latching on to #neverforget and leaving people who were directly affected by the terrorist attacks of 2001 wondering why these brands felt it appropriate to use this day of remembrance as an opportunity chime in online in strategic communication channels (Monllos, 2014). As journalist Sean Bonner said in an interview with Ad Week, "Brands aren't people." He goes on to say that, "Brands do not have emotions or

memories or condolences or heartbreak. People have those things…" General brand accounts cannot convey the same messages as a real, trusted person. The September 11 branded social media messages illustrate that even in branded social media conversations, people find messages from other people to be more credible and believable.

Incidents like this one, where brand managers use general brand accounts to attempt to convey human emotion, are not isolated. This type of incident begs the question: Are brands better off having social media conversations in the third person, identifying no specific person as the speaker, or in the first-person, sending messages from a specific person's point of view? Do consumers have different responses to social media messages coming from an identified person than from branded social media accounts where there is no identified individual? As seen in poetry for hundreds of years, authors often attribute human emotions to inanimate objects, a literary device known as pathetic fallacy. Pathetic fallacy posits that people communicate perceptions of the world based not on objective observations but rather as projections of their internal understanding of the world (Klugman, 2003). The idea of projecting human characteristics onto a nonhuman entity is not just seen in classic poetry and literature; it continues to be seen in many forms of media, including marketing communications. Many strategic communicators give their brand human characteristics (Folse, Burston & Netemeyer, 2013), and the personality characteristics those human characteristics portray extend to social media and brand conversations.

Parasocial interaction theory posits that people form relationships with public figures or personas, and, with the above described human characteristics, brands could perhaps fall into that category. However, research on parasocial interaction has found

that these sorts of relationships, where one party perceives a relationship where the other is engaging only in one-way communication, form in a similar fashion to interpersonal relationships (Perse & Rubin, 1989, Rubin & McHugh, 1987, Horton & Wohl, 1954), regardless of the medium (Thorson & Rodgers, 2006, Labrecque, 2014, Stever & Lawson, 2013). Openness in communication, signaled by the messages sender's self-disclosure, and perceived interactivity, signaled by indications of responsiveness and listening, are two key antecedents of parasocial interaction (Labrecque, 2014), and these characteristics are also key components of building brand trust, particularly on social media (DiStaso & Bortree, 2012). These findings suggest that openly identifying a source in social media messages could lead to greater opportunities for personal connections with consumers, and thus, higher brand trust resulting from those interactions.

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of source identification on parasocial interaction and brand trust on social media by comparing perceptions of marketer-generated social media content from brand accounts with no identified author to content from the accounts of the brand's CEO. The study was guided by the theory of parasocial interaction, which suggests that people perceive relationships with personas engaging in one-way communication, and existing research that suggests that higher levels of parasocial interaction result in higher levels of brand trust (Labrecque, 2014, Folse, Burston & Netemeyer, 2013, Horton & Wohl, 1956). The study also drew on the concept of intermedia effects, which posits that people interact with and respond to messages differently when the messages are presented through different media (Rodgers, 2005). Existing research in this area suggests that each medium needs to be tested in its

own context in order for effective conclusions to be drawn. Thus, this study examined parasocial interaction in the context of social media networks Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, where little research in this area has been done. The study used a 2 (identity) x 3 (social media channel) mixed factorial experiment. Identity was a within-subjects factor and social media channel was a between-subjects factor.

Though a parasocial interaction does not necessarily require that one party be famous, studies have found that brand CEOs tend to be more well received in strategic communications than regular everyday people or average employees (Fleck & Zeitoun, 2014, Kerin & Berry, 1981). Because of this potential for connection to consumers and parasocial interaction, brand CEOs were used as the identified source in this study.

The independent variables were the presence of a CEO's identity and the social media network the messages are displayed on. The CEO's identity was defined as the presence of pictures featuring the CEO's identity and the CEO's name included in the account description. The social media networks depicted were Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. The dependent variables were brand trust and level of parasocial interaction.

Participants were given an online survey. Participants saw manipulated social media posts for both source identification conditions (CEO identified or not) on one social media network (Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram), and answered a series of Likert-scale questions to gauge their brand trust and level of parasocial interaction.

This research contributed to existing knowledge on best practices in social media — an area of interest to both academic researchers and practitioners — and added to the body of work on parasocial interaction theory. Social media is predicted to account for more than 20% of marketing budgets by 2019, with overall digital media spending

expected to increase more than 10% and traditional ad spending to fall more than 3% by 2015 (Moorman, 2014). The need to understand which social media tactics work best is paramount, as marketers and companies continue to devote more advertising dollars to social media efforts.

Literature Review

Parasocial Interaction

Parasocial interaction is defined as the perceived relationship one party has with a celebrity or other public figure, when in fact, that public figure is disseminating one-way communication (Horton & Wohl, 1956). Take pop star Katy Perry's social media presence as an example. Perry, whose Twitter account @katyperry has more than 50 million followers, regularly tweets out content that one would expect to be found on the social media accounts of personal friends, such as what she's eating or links to Buzzfeed articles (Perry, 2014). Perry has an intensely loyal following of fans, many of which feel connected to Perry and her personal life. Yet there is little personal interaction between the average fan and Perry, making the relationship one-sided. Thus, the relationship between Perry and her fans is parasocial. That is, these relationships are about the perceived interaction, not about the reality (Horton & Wohl, 1956).

The theory of parasocial interaction was first proposed long before the social media era (Horton & Wohl, 1956), and studies have examined parasocial interactions with traditional media personas such as television hosts (Rubin & McHugh, 1987), radio personalities (Horton & Wohl, 1954), and soap opera characters (Perse & Rubin, 1989) through the parasocial interaction lens. Each of the studies indicated that consumers form parasocial relationships with media personas that resemble interpersonal relationships with friends.

Though social media differs from traditional media in that there is a technical capability for public figures to interact with their fans, most branded communication on

social media resembles the one-way flow of traditional media more than two-way interpersonal communication (Labrecque, 2014). Brand managers typically craft messages for their millions of followers as they would craft a message in a traditional advertisement, instead of for any one individual (Khim-Yong, Cheng-Suang & Zhijie, 2013). Even in instances when branded social media accounts or personas respond to users individually, the responses are often sent from a brand representative bound by strict response and usage guidelines (Labrecque, 2014). The conversations lack the candid nature key to true interpersonal interactions, making most brand-to-consumer social media relationships parasocial.

Because the theory of parasocial interaction applies to other media in addition to television and radio, parasocial interaction has been studied in a variety of new media and computer-mediated channels, including political blogs (Thorson & Rodgers, 2006), branded blogs (Labrecque, 2014) and Twitter accounts of celebrities (Stever & Lawson, 2013). These studies have shown that users do perceive parasocial interactions online in a similar fashion to the parasocial interactions perceived in traditional media. The difference in channel does not appear to inhibit the formation of the parasocial interactions.

Openness in communication and perceived interactivity are two key antecedents of parasocial interaction. Both of these constructs are signaled through message content, with openness in communication marked by the message sender's self-disclosure, such as sharing personal information, and perceived interactivity marked by indications of responsiveness and listening, such as personalized messages or retweets (Labrecque, 2014). Identification of these constructs is useful to social media strategists and

managers, who can control message content on their channels to create stronger parasocial interactions when desired. This research yielded some practical implications that could inform best practices on social media when it comes to using or not using an identified CEO on social media.

Parasocial interaction is also relevant to social media because of the similarities the formation process of a parasocial relationship has to the formation process of an interpersonal relationship (Rubin & McHugh, 1987). Just as in interpersonal relationships, sharing personal information builds feelings of intimacy, increases liking and reduces feelings of uncertainty in parasocial relationships (Perse & Rubin, 1989). Thus, just as interpersonal relationships can be bolstered by social media communication, the researcher of this study assumed there would be a similar bolstering for parasocial relationships building on social media based on the similarities between the formation processes of parasocial and interpersonal relationships.

Another point of parasocial interaction that is important in the context of social media is that research has shown that the strength of the parasocial interaction is not directly connected to the length of exposure to the persona or messages (Perse & Rubin 1989). Marketer-generated social media messages, especially paid placements, are not often seen repeatedly or regularly by users. Because of paid placement guidelines and the algorithms that dictate what posts appear on social media users' news feeds, users may only see each promoted post once. With these limitations in mind, the ability to build relationships with limited message exposure, as suggested by Perse & Rubin (1989), could provide valuable opportunities for marketers to impact consumers through social media messages.

Defining Brands

A brand is a combination of images, experiences and messages that communicates how a company wants to be received by consumers. Though the brand is formed around products or companies, the products and people behind those products are not themselves a brand (Williams, 2014). A brand is a series of individual exposures that creates more abstract feelings and ideas in the minds of consumers, with the intent of those feelings and ideas, such as safety or youthfulness, to be associated with the specific products or services that fall under the brand's umbrella.

A strong brand is built on the company's mission and the unique benefits of its offerings, and it explains who the company is and who they hope to be in the future. It often is a symbol of the promise the company is making to the consumer with its goods or services (Williams, 2014). Because brands are so strongly associated with intangible and invaluable consumer feelings and perceptions (Lind, 2012), all the individual components of a brand can be hard to identify, and the overall monetary value of a brand to a company can be hard to quantify. However, a brand will often include a distinct name, a logo, an image or voice, and a spokesperson (Anderson, 2007).

Brands became a powerful marketing asset in America in the 1980s, when companies began to seek a more long-term solution to increasing sales after harsh price cuts in the consumer-goods industry (What are brands for?, 2014). The original purpose of brands was to give consumers confidence in the quality of the product. Today, even as more and more consumers seek out user-generated online reviews to determine a product or service's quality, brands continue to play a role in purchase habits of consumers (What are brands for?, 2014).

Brands are not merely the visions of an advertising executive, but rather the culmination of the culture, benefits, and consumer perceptions of a company (Lind, 2012). Particularly in today's social media age, company executives and brand managers listen to existing consumer perceptions (Lind, 2012) to craft a brand that merges both what the company strives for and what the consumer sees (Williams, 2014).

Social Media

Social media has been used as a marketing tool by brands since the early 2000s (Kaplan & Haenlien, 2010), and its importance to marketers continues to increase, as evidenced by the rise of social media campaigns, social media teams, and even the formation of social media agencies. Social media experts have emerged, and remained, because, while brands are beginning to understand the importance of social media in a marketing communications plan, the social media landscape is a complicated one to navigate effectively.

Kaplan and Haenlien (2010) define social media as "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content" (p. 61). Web 2.0, a term first used in 2004, describes the shift from information being simply broadcasted to information being collaborated on after it has been disseminated (Kaplan & Haenlien, 2010). In Web 2.0, content is not just put out by individuals; it is added to and updated by the online community in which it lives (Kaplan & Haenlien, 2010). User-generated content, or UGC, is exactly what it sounds like: content generated by users. UGC is how social media users express themselves, with words, photos, videos, or any other original, publishable form of expression (Kaplan & Haenlien, 2010).

Marketer-generated content (MGC), however, is content created by someone working on behalf of a brand for purposes of reaching an audience. There has been a much research on user-generated content and its role in online communities and social media, but the literature lacks findings on marketer-generated content. Thus, more research is needed for brands to gain understanding on how to best use their content.

What the convergence of social media and UGC means for brands is that company executives and brand managers no longer have full control over their brands' stories (Gensler, Völckner, Liu-Thompkins & Wiertz, 2013); consumers do not see MGC alone. Unlike traditional media, where advertisers create the message telling the brand story they want to tell, advertisers send that message, and users receive the message as intended, social media forces "open source branding" (Vernuccio, 2014, pg. 212), where social media users add to and modify the information the brand presents rather than accepting it for what it is. Given the speed of the impact of electronic word of mouth (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010), those modifications often become part of the brand story, meaning consumers now influence other consumers' perceptions of brands.

Now more than ever, the success of a social media strategy depends not just on putting content out there, but on getting users engaged to create network exposure (Gensler et al., 2013). Companies are taking action to respond to this need for consumer engagement by humanizing content with a personal and relaxed voice in their branded communication (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Humanized content has been found to receive better results in consumer attitudes, and authenticity is a key factor in being persuasive (Gensler et al., 2013). Two fundamental approaches apply in this human-centric strategy: openness and interactivity, where openness reflects the degree to which

brands are open to the ideas of users in its brand story, and interactivity is the level of control over the messages being sent and received (Vernuccio, 2014).

Within the greater umbrella of social media, there are several platform categories, including blogs and collaborative projects such as Wikipedia. This study focused on another category, social networking sites such as Facebook, which Kaplan and Haenlien (2010) define as "applications that enable users to connect by creating personal information profiles, inviting friends and colleagues to have access to those profiles, and sending e-mails and instant messages between each other" (p. 62). Social networking sites differ from other categories of social media because the reason the content is produced is to interact with others, while in platforms like content communities, users curate content for their own personal use (Kaplan & Haenlien, 2010).

Because the differences in the features of social networking sites were not of primary interest to this study, multiple social networking platforms were studied. Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram were selected based on their high recognition levels among consumers and similarity of content to each other. Additionally, research has found that Twitter and Facebook are good platforms for which to converse with consumers (Gensler et al. 2013). Instagram is a young platform and has not been thoroughly studied, but it has high engagement rates, making it a promising place to reach consumers.

Though these social media networks are similar, differences do exist between them. Facebook is the most diverse in terms of the content shared; text, photos and videos are easy to share. The demographic is also most diverse on Facebook, with 71% of online adults using the social media network (Pew Research Internet Project, 2014),

and that influences the type of content shared by its users and the motivation for using it. Facebook is a place to connect with old friends, family and new acquaintances. Twitter has more constraints in terms of content shared. Posts are limited to 140 characters, which leads many users to share headline-like text with links to more information. Though photos and videos can be shared as well, multimedia content is not featured as prominently as on Facebook. Unlike Facebook and Instagram, comments and user-to-user interaction is also not displayed as prominently, making Twitter a place to follow celebrities and influencers in addition to friends. Instagram is the most limited of the three networks in terms of what kind of content can be shared. Each post has the exact same format; a photo, which covers the majority of the post area, with a text caption. Videos can also be shared in this same format, with a limit of 15 seconds for each video. There is no limit to the amount of text that can be posted as a caption, but links can only be placed in profile (not in the post itself). Though it is expanding, Instagram has become a social media network with a focus on arts and culture, with many accounts focused on food, fashion and design. Instagram is a streamlined place to view photos of friends and family alongside photos featuring the latest trends from brands and influencers.

As of October 2014, Facebook was the second most-visited website in the United States, Twitter was the ninth most-visited and Instagram was the 17th most-visited website. While other social media sites such as YouTube (third), LinkedIn (seventh), and Pinterest (12th) ranked higher (Alexa, 2014), the three networks selected are most similar in content forms. Users view content in a similar fashion on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, with users seeing multiple messages at once as they scroll through each

network's respective newsfeed. Each of these channels also offers paid advertising opportunities, or "sponsored posts."

As of September 2013, 71% of online adults in the U.S. used Facebook, and 17% of online adults used Instagram. As of January 2014, 19% of online adults were using Twitter (Pew Research Internet Project, 2014). As of September 2013, 57% of Instagram users, 63% of Facebook users, and 46% of Twitter users were visiting the site daily (Pew Research Internet Project, 2013). These statistics are important because there is a high probability that participants not only had familiarity with the social media network but also had engaged with it before.

Research is limited on the effects these differences and similarities between social media networks have on the level of trust and parasocial interaction users perceive from each social media network. The differences in the type of content shared, the motivation for using each specific network, and the saturation of each social media network would suggest there would be differences between Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. However, these differences are nuanced. The overall purpose of social media, "the creation and exchange of User Generated Content" (Kaplan and Haenlien, 2010, pg. 61), is being served by each network, which suggests there would be no differences perceived by users in terms of brand trust and parasocial interaction for each network.

RQ1: Will users perceive a significant difference between the levels of parasocial interaction and brand trust yielded from Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram content?

CEOs as Spokespeople

Though Katy Perry is not a CEO, the example of the parasocial interaction her social media presence creates can be applied to more general branded communication.

At the core, Perry is selling a brand: herself. Perry is just one example of how fostering parasocial relationships can bolster a brand, and her social media presence illustrates the potential for brands to create a connection with consumers on social media by using a real person, whether that person carries the namesake of the brand or not.

Little research has been done in the area of spokespeople representing a brand on social media. While some research has been done on celebrity athletes endorsing brands using their own personal social media accounts (Hambrick & Mahoney, 2011), looking to more relevant research on spokespeople in traditional media allowed for comparison to the area being studied: marketer-generated content, which comes directly from the brand and not users. This is an important distinction because the social media sources in these studies were not identified as official representatives of the brand; they were simply endorsers communicating using the social media account they used for various other personal uses. The channel was not brand controlled. The messages from branded social media accounts, however, are more similar to the controlled communications of traditional print advertisements than external endorsements. Thus, research on brand spokespeople, particularly CEOs, was more relevant to this context of this study.

A qualitative study (Fleck & Zeitoun, 2014) examining different types of spokespeople in print advertising showed that people connected with advertisements featuring CEOs more than those with lower-level employees. People were skeptical of advertisements with lower-level employees, expressing increased skepticism of the interests the employees were expressing in the ad and if they were in fact real employees. CEOs, however, were viewed with admiration and seen as ordinary people with extraordinary stories (Fleck & Zeitoun, 2014). In another study, Kerin and Berry (1981)

found that consumers who viewed advertisements featuring a CEO were more likely to inquire about the company's services and the companies were perhaps seen to have higher credibility. CEOs also tend to be public figures, much like those tested in existing parasocial interaction research. Thus, a CEO was selected to represent the brand in this study.

Brand Trust

As a precursor to brand loyalty, which contributes to brand equity and ultimately profits, brand trust is a valid and important metric for advertising research (Folse, Burston & Netemeyer, 2013). Brand trust is defined by Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) as "the willingness of the average consumer to rely on the ability of the brand to perform its stated function" (p. 82). According to commitment-trust theory (Morgan & Hunt, 1994), trust is needed for development of the desire to build and maintain a long-term relationship, regardless of whether the relationship is with an individual or an organization. Consumers become more loyal to brands they trust because established trust brings additional value to the relationship (Morgan & Hunt, 1994).

Research on brand trust has shown it plays an important role in consumers' minds while shopping (Delgado-Ballester & Munuera-Aleman, 2001), and social media have been shown to have an effect on building that trust in consumers (Laroche, Habibi & Richard, 2013). Consumers frequently use social media to express the trust, or lack thereof, in brands (Betrand, 2013). Studies have found that brand trust positively relates to brand loyalty in many industries, including environmental sustainability (Kang & Hur, 2012), luxury brands (Younghee, Won-Moo, & Minsung, 2012), and health care (Zismer, 2012).

Several existing studies on brand trust in social media focus on brand communities (Habibi, Laroche & Richard, 2014, Laroche, 2013), which are online opportunities for consumers to regularly interact with and share content from a brand using social media while also interacting with fellow customers of the brand. These studies have shown that those involved in a brand community have higher brand trust for the brand they engage with than brands they do not engage with (Habibi et al., 2014), illustrating that social media content can play a role in shaping the trust that leads to brand loyalty.

Two proposed antecedents for building brand trust are product satisfaction (Kang & Hur, 2012) and positive emotional feelings toward the brand, or brand affect (Younghee, Won-Moo, & Minsung, 2012). Open and transparent communication, particularly on social media, is also proposed to build stronger trust in brands (DiStaso & Bortree, 2012).

Brand trust is particularly relevant to social media because the concept recognizes that consumers' perceived value of a brand can be derived from sources other than their satisfaction with the functional performance of a product (Delgado-Ballester & Munuera-Aleman, 2001). Social media strategies are often put into place to build brand loyalty via increased consumer engagement with this idea in mind, making brand trust a metric relevant to social media marketers.

Based on this review of the literature, the following hypotheses were proposed and tested in this study.

H1: Marketer-generated social media content that identifies CEO as author will yield higher levels of parasocial interaction than content from a general brand source that does not include the identification of a CEO.

H2: Marketer-generated social media content that identifies a CEO as author will yield higher levels of brand trust than content from a general brand source that does not include the identification of a CEO.

Connecting Parasocial Interaction to Brand Trust

The value of both parasocial interactions and brand trust to brands lies not in the constructs themselves, but rather in the shifts in brand loyalty that can occur because of them (Labreque, 2014, Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). The constructs that have been shown to affect parasocial interaction are also related to constructs that build trust. As mentioned earlier, parasocial interactions decrease uncertainty (Perse & Rubin, 1989), and confidence has been shown to be a key component of building trust (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). This study posited that stronger parasocial interactions would relate to stronger brand trust, which has been shown to lead to brand loyalty (Morgan & Hunt, 1994).

While little research exists on the relationship between parasocial interaction and brand trust, the constructs appeared to follow similar development processes and result in similar outcomes. Literature for both constructs continually related the formation of relationships with mediated personas or brands to the formation of relationships in interpersonal, social settings. Information sharing and interactivity contribute to the development of parasocial interaction, brand trust and interpersonal relationships. It appeared that the channel has little bearing on relationship formation process (Horton & Wohl, 1956, Thorson & Rodgers, 2006, Labreque, 2014), and that similar attributes are

related to similar outcomes under any of these three relationship frames. Thus, a third hypothesis was proposed and tested based on this literature.

H3: The greater the parasocial interaction in social media content, the greater the brand trust will be for that content.

Methods

This experiment examined the effect of source identification in social media accounts on the level of brand trust and parasocial interaction perceived in social media messages. There were two independent variables, whether the social media source is identified or not and the social media network. The method was an experiment and the design of the experiment was a 2 (source identification) x 3 (social media network) mixed factorial design. Source identification was defined as an intentionally identified account holder associated with a social media account using profile names, pictures, and biography descriptions. Source identification, a within-subjects factor, had two levels: a branded account associated with identified brand CEO and a branded account with no identified account holder. Social media network was defined as an "application that enables users to connect by creating personal information profiles, inviting friends and colleagues to have access to those profiles, and sending e-mails and instant messages between each other" (Kaplan & Haenlien, 2010, p. 62). Social media network, a between-subjects factor, had three levels: Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Participants were randomly assigned to stimuli that depicted posts on Twitter, Facebook, or Instagram based on their responses to an item asking the first letter of their last name, and parasocial interaction and brand trust were measured in each condition.

This experimental survey study expected to provide insights on the relationship between the identification of a source effectively because it pinpointed the area of interest. By providing participants with consistent content and comparing their reactions, conclusions can be drawn about how this specific element of social media contributed to

perception. Using stimulus materials that depicted posts on actual social media networks established credibility and familiarity, thus allowing subjects to process the content more easily and effectively.

Participants

Participants were treated in accordance with the rules and policies of the University of Missouri — Columbia Institutional Review Board (IRB).

104 participants were recruited from upper level journalism courses at the University of Missouri — Columbia. VanVoorhis and Morgan (2007) suggest that between 14 and 30 participants will yield a power of approximately 80%, depending on the effect size. Given that the design utilizes both a between- and within-subjects factor, a sample size of 104 provides enough power, as each participant provided responses to both the brand CEO and unidentified source condition for each treatment group. With each participant providing two responses, a total of 208 responses were collected.

Table 1

Response Distribution Across Treatment Groups

Source	Treatment Groups (Between Subjects Variables)		
	Facebook	Twitter	Instagram
Brand CEO	44	36	24
Unidentified Source	44	36	24

To ensure the clarity and technical functionality of the questionnaire, a pilot study of 11 participants was run. Pilot studies such as this one are used to pinpoint potential methodological issues and plan for a larger study. For a study of this size and of this nature, a sample 10 participants was adequate (Hertzog, 2008). Based on the results of the pilot study, it was determined that the manipulation check was unclear, and slight changes were made to the item to make it clearer. The wording of the manipulation check

was changed to ask who the social media messages were from (versus who sent the messages), and the multiple choice options were changed from including names of specific people, such as "social media director Paul Johnson," to offering options of more general titles, such as "a paid spokesperson." Because of the difference in the questionnaire, the data from the pilot study was not used in the analysis.

The study targeted Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram users in the United States aged 18 or older. The study screened for social media users by asking if the participants hold accounts on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram before they proceeded with the survey. If participants responded that they did not hold accounts on Twitter, Facebook, or Instagram, they were taken to the end of the survey and no data was collected. Self-identifying demographic questions including age, gender, and education level were also asked of the user later in the survey with an open-ended item for age and multiple choices items for gender and education level. Participants also answered questions about their social media usage habits and attitudes toward social media networks.

The participants reviewed a consent form before entering. If they agreed to the terms of the consent form by clicking "I consent," the participant was agreeing to take part in the study and was taken to the online survey. Participants accessed the experiment on personal computers or other web-enabled devices on their own time.

Survey participants were randomly assigned to one of the three treatment groups based on the self-reported first letter of their last name to control for selection bias (Creswell, 2009), and each treatment group saw two conditions, for a total of six conditions in this study. Each group had stimulus materials with manipulated posts from either Twitter, Facebook or Instagram; one condition was material from a brand CEO on

one social media network and the second condition in each group was the material from a branded account with no identified source on the same social media network. Within the survey, the order in which the social media posts appeared and their corresponding questions were randomized to ensure that order effects did not create the result. The survey took approximately 15 minutes to complete.

Variables

Independent variables. Two independent variables were manipulated to create the six conditions tested in the three experimental groups: source identification and social media network.

Source identification. The variable of source identification was operationalized as either an identified CEO or no identified source. All participants saw posts from both an identified CEO and posts without an identified source.

Brand CEO account. The CEO who held the social media account was identified in the social media account with the following elements:

- CEO's name as profile name
- Brand name in bio
- Title in bio
- Profile picture of the person

Brand account with unidentified author. Brand social media accounts without an identified author were identified in the social media account with the following elements:

- Brand logo as profile picture
- Brand name as account name

- Information about company in bio
- No person's name in bio

Social media network. The variable of social media network was operationalized in terms of: Twitter, Facebook, or Instagram. The logo for each respective network appeared in the stimuli, which served as adequate identification since only those with accounts on at least one of the social media sites qualified for the study. Participants saw posts from only one of the three social media networks. This design most effectively allowed for comparison of the two source identification conditions while controlling for the differences in each particular social media network.

Dependent variables. Two dependent variables were measured for each condition: brand trust and parasocial interaction.

Brand trust. Brand trust is defined by Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) as "the willingness of the average consumer to rely on the ability of the brand to perform its stated function" (p. 82). This study measured brand trust using an index adapted by Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) from a scale developed by Garbarino and Johnson (1999). The index included the following 7-point Likert scale items (Facebook: Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.89$, Twitter: Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.87$, Instagram: Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.79$).

1. I trust this brand.
2. I rely on this brand.
3. This is an honest brand.
4. This brand is safe.

Parasocial interaction. Parasocial interaction describes relationships that people form with public figures or personas when in fact the public figure is disseminating only one-way communication. This study measured parasocial interaction using an index developed by Labrecque (2014) adapted from Rubin, Perse, and Powell (1985), which included the following 7-point Likert scale items (Facebook: Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.89$, Twitter: Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.87$, Instagram: Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.79$).

1. This brand makes me feel comfortable, as if I am with a friend.
2. When I interact with this brand, I feel included.
3. I can relate to this brand.
4. I like hearing what this brand has to say.
5. I care about what happens to this brand.
6. I hope this brand can achieve its goals.

Control variables. Several variables, attitude toward the ad, visits to the social media network, and engagement with the social media network, served as controls on preconceptions toward the social media networks being tested: Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. While testing these existing social media networks was the most effective choice for this study due to the low external reliability of creating a new, fictional social media network, the participants, who were all social media users, likely had preexisting perceptions toward Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. These variables controlled for these preexisting attitudes toward each social media network.

Attitude toward the ad. Attitude toward the ad is defined as "a predisposition to respond in a favorable or unfavorable manner to a particular advertising stimulus during a particular exposure occasion" (MacKenzie, Lutz, & Park, 1989, p. 49). Because social

media is still a new medium in an academic context, there is no existing scale that specifically measures attitudes toward it. Thus, the widely used "attitude toward the ad" scale was used to measure attitudes towards the social media networks being tested in this study: Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Participants presumably had preexisting attitudes toward each of these popular social media networks. Because the study used these real social media networks (versus fictitious ones), this measure served as a control on preexisting attitudes toward the networks. Attitude toward the ad was measured using three 7-point Likert scale semantic differential items developed by MacKenzie, Lutz, and Park (1989). The original scale was altered slightly to measure these social media networks; instead of being asked about the "ad" in the item prompt, participants responded to a prompted naming the specific social media network (Facebook: Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.885$, Twitter: Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.88$, Instagram: Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.91$).

My attitude toward [social media network] is:

1. Good – Bad
2. Favorable – Unfavorable
3. Likable – Unlikeable

Visits to the social media networks. As additional controls, users' social media habits were measured. One of those habits measured was frequency of visits to the social media network. Visits were defined as navigating to the social media platform via a Web browser, mobile device, or mobile application. Participants responded to a 7-point Likert scale item asking how often, on average, they visit each social media network.

Engagement with the social media networks. Engagement with the social media networks being tested was the second habits measure. Engagement on social media

refers to activities such as sharing photos, linking to articles, reposting stories from others, and liking and commenting of posts from others (Habibi, Laroche, & Richard, 2014). Participants answered a 7-point Likert scale item asking, "How often do you post or repost (i.e. sharing or retweeting) content on the following social media networks?" for each social media network.

The manipulation check, a test used to determine if the manipulation of the independent variable had the intended effect (Wimmer & Dominick, 2001), also served as a control variable. The item measured whether the participant correctly identified the source of the content they viewed.

Stimulus Materials

The three treatment groups were each presented with two social media messages from one fabricated brand. One of the stimuli included messages from the account associated with the brand CEO and the other stimulus included messages from the account with no identified source. The posts used in the stimuli were developed based on content from real brands and were presented under the name Birele, a brand name that has been tested for credibility and familiarity (Rodgers, 2000).

Procedure

Once recruited participants answered the prescreening questions about Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram usage, they were randomly assigned to one of the three treatment conditions based on the self-reported first letter of their last name. The subjects accessed the online survey, which exposed the subjects to stimuli and prompted them to answer questions following the exposure to each stimulus, using their own electronic devices.

Participants in each of the three conditions, social media content from Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram, viewed and answered questions in response to two sets of manipulated social media content: one from an account associated with a brand CEO and one from an account with no identified source. To control for bias between the three treatment groups, the messages in each treatment group were the same.

The topics of the social media posts were all general brand-building messages, such as an announcement of a new blog post or a photo featuring a product; the posts were not related to a crisis, a sales promotion, or a timely news event. Though based on posts seen from real brands engaging in social media networks, all the posts were fictional and came from the same fictional brand. The two stimuli seen by each participant were about the same topics to control for message effects.

To ensure that the source was visible, participants viewed the posts as they would appear as part of a user's profile. For Facebook and Twitter, they saw the profile picture, the cover photo, the title of the account, the number of likes or followers, the basic "About" section, and the actual posts. On Facebook and Twitter, both the CEO account and the unidentified branded account carried the "verified symbol" appropriate for each respective social network and had the same number of followers to ensure equal perceived credibility for each account. For external reliability, Instagram posts appeared as they would on a mobile device. As an additional credibility equalizer, all the posts had the same number of likes and no comments.

After the participants viewed each of the two manipulated social media posts, they responded to a manipulation check item to ensure they identified the source before answering other questions about the social media content.

Participants responded to the stimuli they saw with two sets of items. The first set of items, which included four 7-point Likert scale items, tested brand trust. The second set of items, which included six 7-point Likert scale items, tested parasocial interaction. The prompts for each set of items included the name of the CEO or of the brand to ensure that respondents were aware of the difference in the manipulation. The prompt read, "Based on the social media content you just viewed from [CEO Peter Jones or Birele], please rate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements."

Participants then answered the set of three 7-point Likert scale items measuring their attitude toward the ad, which in the case of this study was each social media network. Finally, they answered a series of demographic questions, including ones about their social media usage habits.

After completion of the survey, participants were given the opportunity to enter their student identifier in order to receive extra credit in participating courses and thanked for their time. Any identifiers provided were removed from the data to protect anonymity consistent with IRB rules and policies.

Data Analysis

Prior to analysis, data was "cleaned," changing any unanswered questions to missing data, as denoted by a period (".") . Descriptive statistics were run. A repeated measures ANOVA was run to examine Research Question 1, Hypothesis 1, and Hypothesis 2. Hypothesis 3 was tested using a correlation. These analyses were first run without the control variables, and then these analyses were be followed up with analyses run with the control variables in additional testing. For the answer to Research Question 1 to be yes, there had to be significant differences between the levels of parasocial

interaction and brand trust yield from each social media network. For the answer to be no, there had to be no significant different in these variables across social media networks. For Hypothesis 1 to be confirmed, the mean parasocial interaction had to be significantly higher for the treatment group that viewed the content from the brand CEO than the content from the social media account with no identified author. For Hypothesis 2 to be confirmed, the mean brand trust must be significantly higher for the treatment group that viewed the content from the brand CEO than the content from the social media account with no identified author. For Hypothesis 3 to be confirmed, there had to be a significant relationship between parasocial interaction and brand trust for both treatment groups.

Results

The data analysis of this study included several parts: data preparation, descriptive statistic analysis, hypothesis testing, and additional testing.

Data Preparation

To prepare the data for analysis, it was "cleaned." Missing or invalid responses were marked with a "." denoting missing data. Variable indices were created from the items in each condition, and then the data from each condition was merged to one data set useable in analyses.

Variable Indices

Three indices were created from survey items: brand trust, parasocial interaction, and attitude toward the ad. Brand trust and parasocial interaction were dependent variables, and attitude toward the ad was a control variable. For each index, a principal component factor analysis and reliability analysis were run to develop the indices. Each index consisted of summing each of the items in the index tested to develop one score for each variable. Cronbach's alpha determined reliability for each of the indices.

Three separate factor analyses and reliability analyses were run for each variable index: one for each social media network tested. The data was then reconfigured for use in the repeated measures ANOVA.

Hypothesis Testing

A repeated measures ANOVA analysis was used to test Research Question 1, Hypothesis 1, and Hypothesis 2. A simple linea correlation analysis was used to test Hypothesis 3. All analyses were conducted with a significance level of $p<0.05$.

Research Question 1 questioned if there would be differences between the levels of parasocial interaction and brand trust yielded from Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram content. A repeated measures ANOVA revealed no significant relationship between parasocial interaction and the social media network, $F(2, 208)=0.039$, $p=0.962$. However, the analysis did reveal a significant relationship between brand trust and the social media network, $F(2, 208)=3.265$, $p=0.04$. While the levels of parasocial interaction did not vary between social media networks, a post hoc Tukey test showed Facebook and Twitter differed significantly in brand trust, $p=0.047$, with Twitter yielding higher levels of brand trust.

Hypothesis 1 predicted that marketer-generated social media content that identified a CEO as the author would yield higher levels of parasocial interaction than content from a general brand source that did not include the identification of a CEO. A repeated measures ANOVA analysis found a significant difference in the levels of parasocial interaction between source types, $F(1, 208)=8.976$, $p=0.003$. However, the brand source with no identified account holder yielded higher levels of parasocial interaction ($M=25.615$, $SD=5.885$) than the CEO source ($M=23.612$, $SD=6.059$). While a difference between source type was predicted, this result is opposite of what was predicted. Thus, this hypothesis is not supported.

Hypothesis 2 predicted that marketer-generated social media content that identified a CEO as author would yield higher levels of brand trust than content from a general brand source that did not include the identification of a CEO. A repeated measures ANOVA analysis found a significant difference in the levels of brand trust between source types, $F(1, 208)=7.27$, $p=0.008$. However, similarly to the parasocial

interaction results, the brand source with no identified account holder yielded higher levels of brand trust (M=18.462, SD=3.785) than the CEO source (M=17.136, SD=3.886). While a difference between source type was predicted, this result is opposite of what was predicted. Thus, this hypothesis was not supported.

Hypothesis 3 predicted the greater the parasocial interaction in social media content, the greater the brand trust would be for that content. A significant positive correlation between parasocial interaction and brand trust was found, $r(208)=0.581$, $p<0.001$. This hypothesis was supported.

Additional Testing

Several control variables were tested and analyzed to determine their effects on parasocial interaction and brand trust. A repeated measures ANOVA was run with these control variables to determine if the results were still significant after being controlled. Source and social media network were used as the independent variables; parasocial interaction and brand trust were used as the dependent variables; and attitude toward the social media network, visits to the social media network, engagement with the social media network, and ability to correctly identify the source were used as the control variables.

After controlling for these variables, the effects of source on the levels of brand trust and parasocial interaction were no longer significant, $F(1, 208)=3.918$, $p=0.051$ and $F(1, 208)=6.082$, $p=0.628$. The effect of social media network on the level of brand trust was also no longer significant, $F(1, 208)=2.610$, $p=0.076$.

There were several significant correlations between the control variables and the dependent variables, but these correlations did not display a consistent trend. There was

a significant correlation between the attitude toward Facebook and the level of brand trust, r(204)=0.171, p=0.016, as well as the level of parasocial interaction, r(204)=0.16, p=0.013. There was also a significant correlation between the attitude toward Instagram and the level of parasocial interaction, r(204)=0.208, p=0.003. Additionally there was a relationship between Facebook engagement and parasocial interaction, r(204)=0.176, p=0.011.

The repeated measures ANOVA finding making the relationship between the social media network and the level of brand trust insignificant, combined with the relationships between only attitude of Facebook and brand trust, attitude toward Instagram and the level of parasocial interaction, and Facebook engagement and parasocial interaction, rules the relationship between social media network and level of brand trust inconclusive without additional research.

The correlation that the most conclusions can be drawn from is the significant correlation found between the correct identification of the source via the manipulation check and brand trust, r(204)=0.164, p=0.018. While the other relationships are not evidence enough to confound other variables since there is not a significant relationship between the dependent variable and each social media network, it is logical that being sure of the source (through correct identification of the source) would result in higher levels of brand trust.

Discussion

This study examined the influence of source identification on parasocial interaction and brand trust on social media by comparing perceptions of marketer-generated social media content from brand accounts with no identified author to content from the accounts of the brand's CEO. The study used a 2 (identity) x 3 (social media channel) mixed factorial experiment, with brand and CEO being the two identity conditions and Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram being the three social media channel conditions. Identity was a within-subjects factor and social media channel was a between-subjects factor. There were three hypotheses and one research question. Research Question 1 questioned if there would be differences between the levels of parasocial interaction and brand trust yielded from Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram content. Hypothesis 1 predicted that marketer-generated social media content that identified a CEO as the author would yield higher levels of parasocial interaction than content from a general brand source that did not include the identification of a CEO. Hypothesis 2 predicted that marketer-generated social media content that identified a CEO as author would yield higher levels of brand trust than content from a general brand source that did not include the identification of a CEO. Hypothesis 3 predicted the greater the parasocial interaction in social media content, the greater the brand trust would be for that content.

There are many circumstances in strategic communication and branding that can only be answered with, "It depends." The findings of this study suggest that the question

of whether to market a CEO on social media networks might be one of those circumstances.

The only of these three hypotheses that was supported was hypothesis 3, with a significant positive correlation between parasocial interaction and brand trust. The findings did not clearly answer Research Question 1. Inconsistent significant relationships found the relationship between brand trust and the social media network inconclusive; when the control variables were taken into account, the relationship between brand trust and social media network was no longer significant. This study produced results opposite of what the literature suggested and what was predicted for hypotheses 1 and 2, with the content from the general brand account with no identified author scoring higher in both brand trust and parasocial interaction than the content from the social media account associated with the CEO.

In the initial repeated measures ANOVA, a significant difference between levels of brand trust was found between social media networks, and post hoc Tukey test showed Facebook and Twitter differed significantly, $p=0.047$. This it is consistent with the intermedia effects theory, which posits that people interact with and respond to messages differently when the messages are presented through different media (Rodgers, 2005). While this study lumped Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram together as one medium, social media, these findings suggest that social media have developed to the point that, to society, Instagram might be to Facebook as radio is to television; they share similarities, but people interact with each medium in different ways. After incorporating the control variables into the analysis, the effects for social media network on brand trust were no longer significant, further reinforcing the idea that people have preconceived notions

about each social media network and how much they can trust it. There were several significant relationships between the dependent variables and the control variables, but they were inconsistent; there was no pattern across the social media networks. Thus, additional testing is needed in order to make any statements about what the relationship is between a specific social media network and perceived levels of brand trust and parasocial interaction.

It was not surprising that hypothesis 3 was supported by the findings of this study; development of trust has been studied extensively, as has parasocial interaction, and there were clear links between the two in terms of characteristics important in the development of either relationship (Perse & Rubin, 1989, Morgan & Hunt, 1994). What was surprising was that participants perceived higher levels of both parasocial interaction and brand trust from content from a general brand social media account with no identified author than from content from an identified CEO's social media account.

In prior studies, a crucial part of building parasocial interaction was the presence of an actual person (Horton & Wohl, 1956, Rubin & McHugh, 1987, Perse & Rubin, 1989, Stever & Lawson, 2013). The literature suggested that, while people do often project human characteristics on brands (Folse, Burston & Netemeyer, 2013), the presence of a human face improved the consumer's ability or perhaps willingness to connect (Kerin and Berry, 1981). The findings of this study suggest otherwise. The participants of this study connected more with a logo than with a human face. While this small study cannot be applied to the general population nor to the general social media landscape, it does bring up some interesting possibilities as to why the results came out like they did.

One such area worthy of consideration is the participants' understanding of how social media management for brands operates and how social media content comes to fruition. This study used a convenience sample of university students, and the sample was largely in their early twenties. As the digital native generation (Millennials as Adults, 2014) and with the average participant in this study posting content to social media two to three times a month, it can be assumed that this group of participants understands that a person is behind the social media accounts of both an individual and a brand. The understanding that a person, not a robot, is behind both accounts could explain an equal level of brand trust and parasocial interaction between social media content from a brand and social media content from a CEO, but it still does not explain the higher levels in brands.

There are two possible explanations for why the level of parasocial interaction and brand trust might be higher branching off the understanding of the inner workings of social media and this demographic. Though a previous study showed that people trusted CEOs more than average employees (Fleck & Zeitoun, 2014), perhaps that isn't the case for this demographic, or even this media channel. Because the CEO presented was a fictional person placed with a headshot of an unfamiliar face, people have no context to who he is. Millennials are the least trusting generation yet (Millennials in Adulthood, 2014), and after the great recession of 2008, there is a heightened sense of distrust of corporate America. This could contribute to the level of distrust for CEOs. It is possible that this demographic simply does not trust high-ranking, white male CEOs with glossy headshots. Another explanation goes back to this demographic's understanding how social media works for brands. There are plenty of CEOs and other public figures who

do not actually run their social media accounts themselves, even if their name and face appears on the account, and many Millennials are aware of this. Without a way to prove the content is coming directly from the source named, there is room for distrust among social media users. While a brand account does not claim to have affiliation with any specific human, a CEO's account does. Because of this, a CEO's account might be held to higher credibility standards, and thus, higher skepticism.

Another explanation for these results has little to do with distrust of CEOs, but rather with the increased trust in brands and brand pages. Over the last several years, customer service through social media networks has become commonplace (Andriole, 2012). Many consumers have even found seeking customer service through social media channels to be more effective than more traditional channels like the phone or an online form. While customer service was intentionally left out as a component of this study, that does not mean that it is not a contributing factor to people's preexisting notions about social media. Advertising has now been on social media for more than 10 years (Fiegerman, 2013); marketers are getting better at it and consumers are growing accustomed to it. This success with using social media to solve real problems in the past, as well as this familiarity with brands appearing in the space, could contribute to these higher levels of brand trust and parasocial interaction with social media content from a brand than social media content from a CEO. CEOs pages are typically not used for any other purpose besides relaying information. For example, where a brand's page might host a contest or promotion, a CEO's page would only link to an article from an outside publication or the company's blog. Additionally, CEOs pages are rarely, if ever, placed in promoted spots on social media. While parasocial interaction literature suggested that

a parasocial relationship can form without repeated exposure (Perse & Rubin, 1989), perhaps exposure to the particular figure or brand is not the issue. In a study by Perse and Rubin (1989), people formed parasocial relationships with soap opera characters they had not seen before, but they had seen those types of characters on soap operas. Maybe brand trust is higher because, like people have seen soap operas, they have seen brand pages. It is possible that seeing a CEO use his personal page and persona as a marketing tool just does not feel right, much like seeing brands on social media, a place for friends, did not feel right several years ago either.

There is a another possibility worth considering: This demographic is not a source judgmental one. That is, these new media users do not determine how much they can trust content on social media based on the source it comes from, but rather based on the content itself. Social media users in this demographic understand that a verification symbol does not necessarily guarantee that the source is actually the person claimed. Without that guarantee, and without being able to determine who the source really is, perhaps the source is a nonfactor. Maybe these participants weren't more suspicious of the CEO's page or more trusting of brand pages; maybe the source just is not a primary consideration factor in how this demographic makes judgments about social media content.

Practical Implications

Because the findings of this study are inconsistent with previous findings, no solid recommendations can be made to social media marketers. However, as not only social media marketing but also content marketing and influencer marketing continue to grow, this study poses the question: do people trust your source? Content marketing is defined

as publishing relevant, valuable and interesting content on an owned channel, rather than a paid or earned one (Wylie, 2014). Influencer marketing is defined as using people with influence or celebrity, i.e. influencers, as channels to disperse a brand message (Weiss, 2014). Though each of these emerging and trending types of marketing is slightly different, they each revolve around the same idea: the person you're presenting is a reputable source of information. This study suggests that simply placing a title of authority next to a person's name and photo does not make the information they present more trustworthy or relatable than information coming from a brand name and logo. In practical situations, it cannot be assumed that a brand's CEO is someone that people will find trustworthy or relatable on social media, and strategies should not be pursued as such.

These results should not be interpreted with the idea that using an internal leader as a spokesperson on social media is always a worse idea than using a brand page. Rather, this study suggests that, prior to beginning a strategy that revolves around making a CEO or other leader the face of the company, additional market research for each individual brand should be done to ensure that consumers actually trust the person being marketed.

The study also suggests that continuing the more common strategy of approaching social media marketing through a brand page or account rather than a specific person is more common for a reason; it is effective. Based on the findings of this research, it is impossible to say which strategy is a better option for any individual company. It is can be argued, however, that presenting content on social media networks through a brand account is consistently a safe choice.

Limitations and Opportunities for Future Research

As mentioned earlier, these proposed explanations are not necessarily supported by this study; they are simply ideas. These ideas cannot be said to be supported because of the numerous limitations of this particular study. The demographic represented in this study is very limited due to the use of a convenience sample of students rather than a random sample of the population; the limited age group means the findings cannot speak to the general population. Additionally, only one brand in one industry and one CEO name and headshot were tested, with the same set of messages for each condition. Finally, participants were not given the opportunity to explain their preferences; explanations about motivation cannot be supported and potential implications cannot be stated without this information.

The study brings up several intriguing ideas for additional research. Firstly, a qualitative study using the same or similar stimuli that gives participants the opportunity to answer why they perceive higher levels of parasocial interaction or brand trust with the content from the brand social media account over the content from CEO's account could provide interesting insights, which might eliminate or confirm some of the possibilities mentioned above. Additionally, a wider quantitative study that asked the same questions of a random sample could provide information on whether demographics contributed to the results. Also, a similar study with a similar sample using a different set of stimuli could determine if the brand or CEO used in the stimuli affects the perception of the content. A study that compares knowledge of the inner workings of social media to the levels of parasocial interaction and brand trust could also provide insight into the topic. Studies on other similar types of marketing, such as content marketing or influencer

marketing mentioned above, could also be using in determining if using a figurehead is a useful strategy in any context.

Conclusion

As social media networks continue to grow, change, and saturate society, marketers continue to use the networks to build their brands. And with this increased usage of social media for marketing purposes comes an influx questions about what works best in terms of connecting and reaching consumers. As many brands attempt to create personalities and convey human emotion through brand social media accounts, a question arises: Should brands use real humans to convey human emotion? Though advertising has been present on social media for 10 years, it is still a relatively young medium, and research is needed to develop best practice guidelines.

This study examined the differences between perceived levels of parasocial interaction and brand trust in content from a general brand social media account with no identified account holder compared to content from a brand CEO's social media account on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. This study found that, while there is a positive correlation between parasocial interaction and brand trust, there is a higher level of perceived parasocial interaction and brand trust from content from a general brand social media account than a CEO's social media account.

Though the results were not the results the literature suggested or that were hypothesized, they do bring up some interesting questions in the field of social media marketing research, and contribute to the greater body of academic work. The idea that a logo could be trusted more than a human face is not one seen often in the literature, and it proposes a new set of ideas that both academics and practitioners could find useful in their work.

References

Alexa (2014). *Top sites in United States.* Retrieved from http://www.alexa.com/topsites/countries/US

Anderson, E. (2007). Brand basics: Create a brand that ensures your long-term success. *Dealernews*, *43*(1), 32.

Andriole, S. J. (2012). Seven Indisputable Technology Trends That Will Define 2015. Communications Of The Association For Information Systems, 3061-72.

Bertrand, G. (2013). Social media research: Developing a trust metric in the social age. *International Journal of Market Research, 55* (3), 333-335.

Charness, G., Gneezy, U., & Kuhn, M. (2011). Experimental methods: Between-subject and within-subject design. *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization, 81*, 1-8.

Chaudhuri, A., & Holbrook, M. B. (2001). The chain of effects from brand trust and brand affect to brand performance: The role of brand loyalty. *Journal of Marketing*, *65* (2), 81-93.

Creswell, J. W. (2009). Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches, 3rd Edition. Los Angeles: Sage Publications.

Delgado-Ballester, E. & Munuera-Aleman, J. L. (2001). Brand trust in the context of consumer loyalty. *European Journal of Marketing, 35* (11), 1238-58.

DiStaso, M. W., & Bortree, D. (2012). Multi-method analysis of transparency in social media practices: Survey, interviews and content analysis. *Public Relations Review*, *38* (3), 511-514. doi:10.1016/j.pubrev.2012.01.003

Fiegerman, S. (2013, August 15). This Is What Facebook's First Ads Looked Like. Retrieved March 26, 2015, from http://mashable.com/2013/08/15/facebook-first-ad/

Fleck, N., Michel, G., & Zeitoun, V. (2014). Brand personification through the use of spokespeople: An exploratory study of ordinary employees, CEOs, and celebrities featured in advertising. *Psychology & Marketing, 31* (1) 84–92.

Folse, J., Burston, S., & Netemeyer, R. G. (2013). Defending brands: Effects of alignment of spokescharacter personality traits and corporate transgressions on brand trust and attitudes. *Journal of Advertising, 42* (4), 331-342.

Garbarino, E., & Johnson, M. S. (1999), "The different roles of satisfaction, trust, and commitment in customer relationships," *Journal of Marketing, 63* (2), 70-87.

Gensler, S., Völckner F., Liu-Thompkins, Y., & Wiertz, C. (2013). Managing brands in the social media environment. *Journal of Interactive Marketing, 27* (4) (2013), 242–256.

Habibi, M., Laroche, M., & Richard, M. (2014). The roles of brand community and community engagement in building brand trust on social media. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *37,* 152-161.

Hambrick, M. E., & Mahoney, T. Q. (2011). 'It's incredible - trust me': Exploring the role of celebrity athletes as marketers in online social networks. *International Journal of Sport Management & Marketing,10* (3/4), 161-179.

Hennig-Thurau, T., Malthouse, E. C., Friege, C., Gensler, S. Lobschat L., Rangaswamy, A., & Skiera, B. (2010). The impact of new media on customer relationships. *Journal of Service Research, 13* (3), 311–330.

Hertzog, M. A. (2008), Considerations in determining sample size for pilot studies. Res. Nurs. Health, 31: 180–191.

Horton, D., & Wohl, R. (1956). Mass communication and parasocial interaction: Observations on intimacy at a distance. *Psychiatry, 19*, 215-29.

Instagram (2014). *Stats*. Retrieved from http://instagram.com/press/

Kang, S., & Hur, W. (2012). Investigating the antecedents of green brand equity: A sustainable development perspective. *Corporate Social Responsibility & Environmental Management*, *19* (5), 306-316. doi:10.1002/csr.281

Kaplan, A. M., & Haenlein, M. (2010). Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of social media. *Business Horizons,53* (1), 59-68. doi:10.1016/j.bushor.2009.09.003

Kerin, R. A., & Barry, T. E. (1981). The CEO spokesperson in consumer advertising: An experimental investigation. *Current Issues & Research In Advertising*, *4* (1), 135-147.

Khim-Yong, G., Cheng-Suang, H., & Zhijie, L. (2013). Social media brand community and consumer behavior: Quantifying the relative impact of user- and marketer-generated content. *Information Systems Research, 24* (1), 88-107. doi:10.1287/isre.1120.0469

Kiss, J. (2014, February 3). Facebook's 10th birthday: From college dorm to 1.23 billion users. *The Guardian.* Retrieved from http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2014/feb/04/facebook-10-years-mark-zuckerberg

Klugman, D. (2003). The figuration of reality: Psychoanalysis, animism, and the 'pathetic fallacy'. *Psychoanalytic Psychology*, 20 (4), 660-676. doi:10.1037/0736-9735.20.4.660

Labrecque, L. I. (2014). Fostering consumer–brand relationships in social media environments: The role of parasocial interaction, *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, *28* (2), Issue 2, 134-148.

Laroche, M., Habibi, M., & Richard, M. (2013). To be or not to be in social media: How brand loyalty is affected by social media?. *International Journal of Information Management*, *33* (1), 76-82. doi:10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2012.07.003

Lind, T. (2012). Corporate brand identity stretches beyond basic logo. *Journal of Business (10756124)*, *27* (5), A13.

MacKenzie, S. B., Lutz, R. J., & Park, W.P. (1989). An empirical examination of the structural antecedents of attitude toward the ad in an advertising pretesting context. Journal of Marketing, 53, 48–65. http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/1251413

Millennials in Adulthood. (2014, March 6). Retrieved March 26, 2015, from http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2014/03/07/millennials-in-adulthood/

Monllos, K. (2014, September 11). This guy's replies to 9/11 brand tweets sum up everything that's wrong with 9/11 brand tweets. *Ad Week.* Retrieved from http://www.adweek.com/adfreak/guys-replies-911-brand-tweets-sum-everything-thats-wrong-911-brand-tweets-160060#.VBROB506XpM.mailto

Moorman, C. (2014, September 3). Tweet this: Social media important to company performance but difficult to prove. Retrieved November 2, 2014, from http://www.forbes.com/sites/christinemoorman/2014/09/03/tweet-this-social-media-important-to-company-performance-but-difficult-to-prove/

Morgan, R. M., & Hunt, S. D. (1994). The commitment-trust theory of relationship marketing*, Journal of Marketing, 58* (3), 20-38.

Perry, K. (2014*). @katyperry*. Retrieved from https://twitter.com/katyperry

Perse, E. M., & Rubin, R. B. (1989). Attribution in social and parasocial relationships. *Communication Research, 16* (1), 59-77.

Pew Research Internet Project. (2013). Social media update 2013. Retrieved from http://www.pewinternet.org/2013/12/30/social-media-update-2013/

Pew Research Internet Project. (2014). Social networking fact sheet. Retrieved from http://www.pewinternet.org/fact-sheets/social-networking-fact-sheet/

Rodgers, S. (2005). Intermedia effects for appropriate/inappropriate print and internet stimuli. In *Advertising, promotion, and new media* (pp. 51-67). Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe.

Rodgers, S. (2014). Predicting Sponsorship Effects in E-Newspapers using the Sponsorship Knowledge Inventory. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Missouri – Columbia, Columbia, Missouri.

Rubin, R.B., & McHugh, M. (1987). Development of parasocial interaction relationships. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 31*, 279-292.

Stever, G. S., & Lawson, K. (2013). Twitter as a way for celebrities to communicate with fans: Implications for the study of parasocial interaction. *North American Journal Of Psychology*, *15* (2), 339-354.

Thorson, K. S., & Rodgers, S. (2006). Relationships between blogs as eWOM and interactivity, perceived interactivity, and parasocial interaction. *Journal Of Interactive Advertising, 6* (2), 39-50.

Twitter (2014). *About*. Retrieved from https://about.twitter.com/company

VanVoorhis, C. R., & Morgan, B. L. (2007). Understanding power and rules of thumb for determining sample sizes. *Tutorials in Quantitative Methods for Psychology, 3* (2), 43-50.

Vernuccio, M. (2014). Communicating corporate brands through social media: An exploratory study. *Journal of Business Communication, 51* (3), 211-233. doi:10.1177/2329488414525400

Weiss, R. (2014). Influencer Marketing. Marketing Health Services, 34(1), 16-17.

What are brands for? (2014). *Economist*, *412* (8902), 57-58.

Williams, J. (2014, June 18). The basics of branding. *Entrepreneur.* Retrieved October 12, 2014, from http://www.entrepreneur.com/article/77408

Wimmer, R., & Dominick, J. (2011). *Mass media research: An introduction* (9th ed.). Boston: Wadsworth.

Wylie, A. (2014). The Awwwww Factor: How Content Marketing Messages Go Viral. Public Relations Tactics, 21(4), 7.

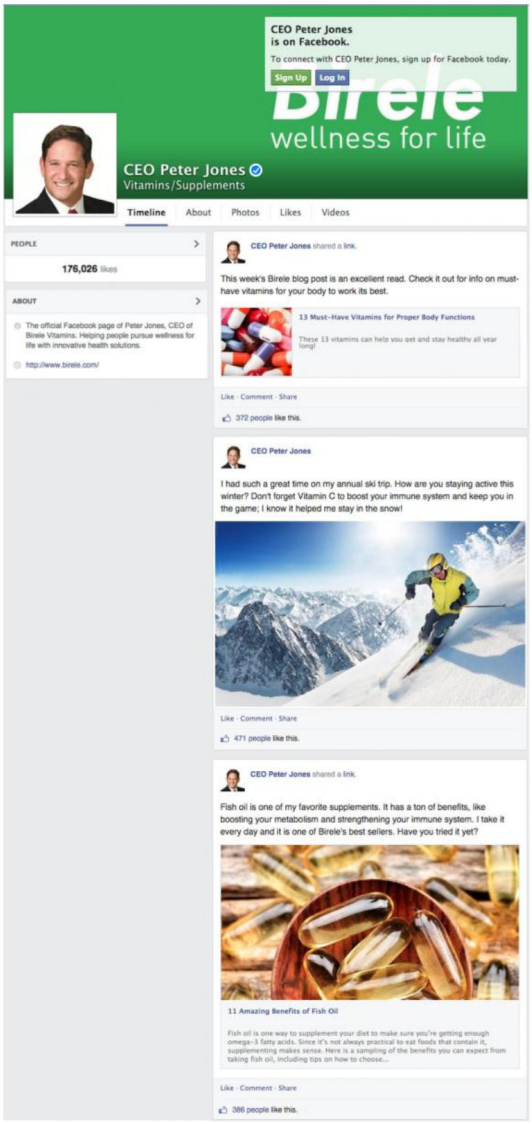
Younghee, S., Won-Moo, H., & Minsung, K. (2012). Brand trust and affect in the luxury brand-customer relationship. *Social Behavior & Personality: An International Journal*, *4 0*(2), 331-338.

Zismer, D. K. (2012). Establishing brand loyalty in health care — What to learn from other industries. *Physician Executive*, *38* (3), 22-26.

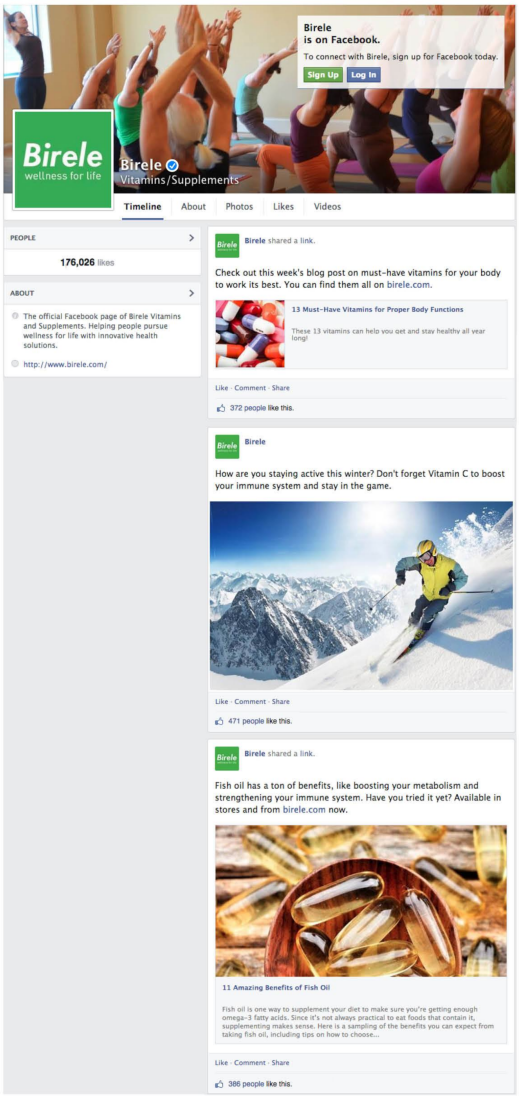
Appendix A: Stimulus Materials

Treatment Group 1: Facebook.

Condition 1: Facebook, CEO

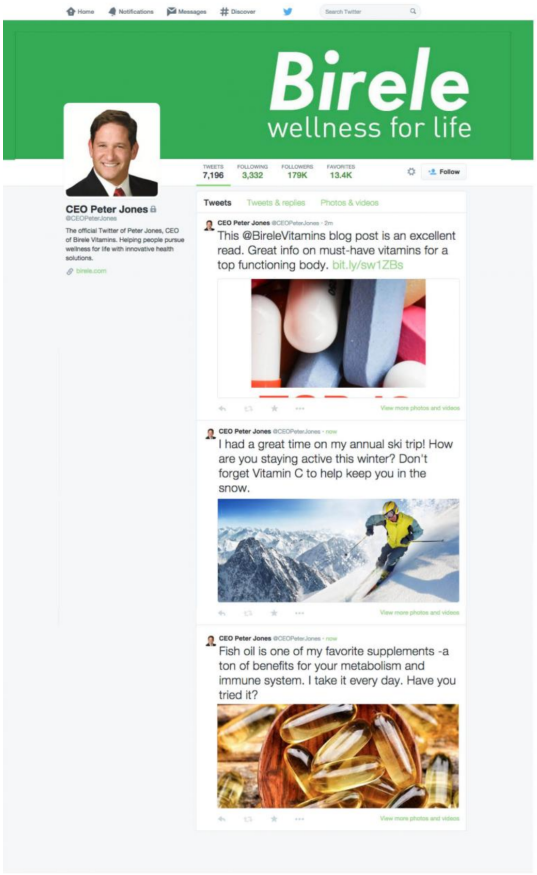


Condition 2: Facebook, Brand

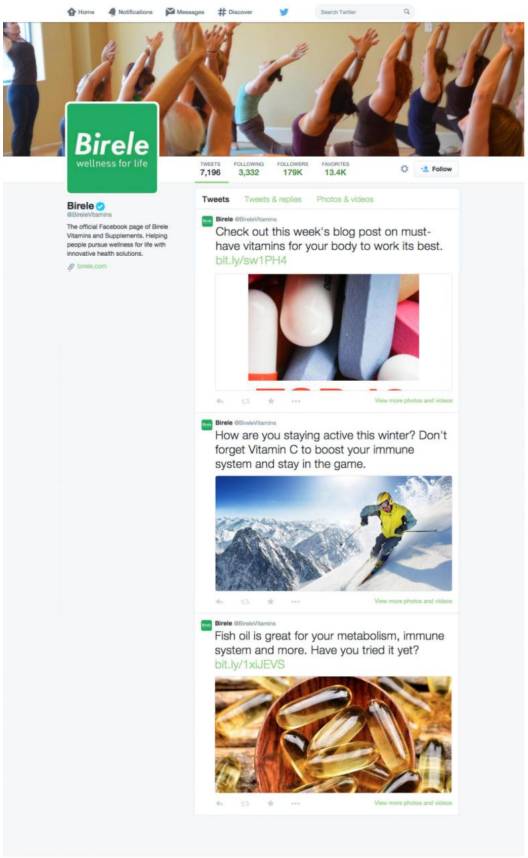


Treatment Group 2: Twitter

Condition 3: Twitter, CEO



Condition 4: Twitter, Brand



Treatment Group 3: Instagram

Condition 5: Instagram, CEO

Condition 6: Instagram, Brand

Appendix B: Survey Instrument

Introduction / Consent

Parasocial interaction on social media: The effects of source identification on brand trust

INTRODUCTION

This consent may contain words that you do not understand. Please ask the investigator or the study staff to explain any words or information that you do not clearly understand.

You are being asked to participate in a research study. This research is being conducted to examine the relationship of parasocial interaction and brand trust in branded social media content. When you are invited to participate in research, you have the right to be informed about the study procedures so that you can decide whether you want to consent to participation. This form may contain words that you do not know. Please ask the researcher to explain any words or information that you do not understand.

You have the right to know what you will be asked to do so that you can decide whether or not to be in the study. Your participation is voluntary. You do not have to be in the study if you do not want to. You may refuse to be in the study and nothing will happen. If you do not want to continue to be in the study, you may stop at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

WHY IS THIS STUDY BEING DONE?

Different social media tactics elicit different responses. This study is designed to evaluate an aspect of social media usage by brands and how consumers react to it.

HOW MANY PEOPLE WILL BE IN THE STUDY?

About 60 people will take part in this study nationwide. Participants must be 18 years of age or older to be eligible to participate.

WHAT AM I BEING ASKED TO DO?

You will be asked to view two social media profiles and corresponding content. Following the social media content, you will be asked to fill out a questionnaire answering questions about your parasocial interaction and brand trust with the content.

HOW LONG WILL I BE IN THE STUDY?

This study will take 15 minutes to complete. You can stop participating at any time without penalty.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF BEING IN THE STUDY?

Your participation will benefit communications professionals and organizations who participate in social media in gathering information about consumer perceptions, in order to deliver valuable social media content to the consumer.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF BEING IN THE STUDY?

There are no foreseeable risks involved in this study.

CONFIDENTIALITY

This is an anonymous study and personal identifiers will not be taken.

WHAT ARE MY RIGHTS AS A PARTICIPANT?

Participation in this study is voluntary. You do not have to participate in this study.

You will also be informed of any new information discovered during the course of this study that might influence your health, welfare, or willingness to be in this study.

WHO DO I CONTACT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS, CONCERNS, OR COMPLAINTS?

Please contact Shelly Rodgers (srodgers@missouri.edu) if you have questions about the research. Additionally, you may ask questions, voice concerns or complaints to the primary researcher, Caroline Murray (cemurray@mail.missouri.edu).

If you have any questions regarding your rights as a participant in this research and/or concerns about the study, or if you feel under any pressure to enroll or to continue to participate in this study, you may contact the University of Missouri Campus Institutional Review Board (which is a group of people who review the research studies to protect participants' rights) at (573) 8829585 or umcresearchcirb@missouri.edu.

Approval Date: 12/29/2014

IRB Project Number: 1214584

By clicking the next button and continuing with the survey, you are indicating that you have read and agree with the terms of consent.

Screeners

1. Do you have a profile on Facebook, Twitter and/or Instagram?

- Yes (If yes, go to Question 2.)
- No (If no, answer the survey.)

2. Which social media networks do you have a profile on? Check all that apply.

- Facebook
- Twitter
- Instagram

3. What is the first letter of your last name?

- A – I
- J – R
- S – Z

Questionnaire

4. Please view the following content. You will be asked to provide your opinion on it in the following questions.

5. Based on the social media messages you just read, who would you say sent those messages?

- A brand representative
- The CEO
- A customer
- A paid spokesperson

6. Based on the social media content you just viewed from Birele, please rate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements. (7-point Likert, where 1 is Disagree and 7 is agree)

- I trust this brand.
- I can rely on this brand.
- This is an honest brand.
- This brand is safe.

7. Based on the social media content you just viewed from Birele, please rate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements. (7-point Likert, where 1 is Disagree and 7 is agree)

- This brand makes me feel comfortable, as if I am with a friend.
- When I interact with this brand, I feel included.
- I can relate to this brand.
- I like hearing what this brand has to say.
- I care about what happens to this brand.
- I hope this brand can achieve its goals.

8. Please view the following content. You will be asked to provide your opinion on it in the following questions.

9. Based on the social media content you just viewed from CEO Peter Jones, please rate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements. (7-point Likert, where 1 is Disagree and 7 is agree)

- I trust this brand.
- I can rely on this brand.
- This is an honest brand.
- This brand is safe.

10. Based on the social media content you just viewed from CEO Peter Jones, please rate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements. (7-point Likert, where 1 is Disagree and 7 is agree)

- This brand makes me feel comfortable, as if I am with a friend.
- When I interact with this brand, I feel included.
- I can relate to this brand.
- I like hearing what this brand has to say.
- I care about what happens to this brand.
- I hope this brand can achieve its goals.

11. Please indicate your attitude toward the following social media networks: (items for Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram)

- Good – Bad (7-point Likert scale)
- Favorable – Unfavorable (7-point Likert scale)
- Likable – Unlikeable (7-point Likert scale)

12. How often do you visit the following social media networks (via the website or mobile app)? (items for Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram)

- Less than once a month
- Once a month
- A few times a month
- Once a week
- A few times a week
- Once per day
- More than once per day

13. How often do you post or repost (i.e. sharing or retweeting) content on the following social media networks? (items for Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram)

- Less than once a month
- Once a month
- A few times a month
- Once a week
- A few times a week
- Once per day
- More than once per day

14. Approximately how many hours per day do you spend on social media networks? (open-ended)

15. How old are you? (open-ended)

16. What is your gender?
- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to answer

17. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
- Some high school
- High school graduate
- Some college, no degree
- Associate's degree
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Professional degree
- Doctorate degree

18. If you are enrolled in a course eligible to receive extra credit for participation in this survey, please indicate which course you wish to receive extra credit in.

19. Please enter your PawPrint to receive extra credit. (Your responses will remain anonymous.)

Appendix C: Results

Table 2

Significance Tests, Social Media Network on Dependent Variables

Dependent Variable	df	F	Mean Square	p
Brand trust	2	3.265	47.411	0.04*
Parasocial interaction	2	0.039	1.41	0.962

Note: *=p<.05

Table 3

Mean Brand Trust in Social Media Networks

Social Media Network	M	SD
Facebook	17.2614	3.70304
Twitter	18.7222	4.22008
Instagram	17.4043	3.4745

Table 4

Significance Tests, Source Type on Dependent Variables

Dependent Variable	df	F	Mean Square	p
Brand trust	1	7.270	93.645	0.008*
Parasocial interaction	1	8.976	234.223	0.003*

Note: *=p<.05

Table 5

Mean Dependent Variable Results by Source Type

Dependent variable	Source type	M	SD
Brand trust	Brand	18.4615	3.78531
	CEO	17.1359	3.88574
Parasocial Interaction	Brand	25.6154	5.8845
	CEO	23.6117	6.05892

Table 6

Correlation Between Brand Trust and Parasocial Interaction

Predictor	B	Std. Error	Beta	p
Parasocial interaction	0.374	0.037	0.581	0

Note: *p=<0.001
Dependent variable: brand trust

Table 7

Significance Tests, with Control Variables

Control Variable	Dependent Variable	df	F	Mean Square	p
Attitude toward Facebook	Brand trust	1	6.917	.698	.406
	Parasocial interaction	1	7.488	.272	.603
Attitude toward Twitter	Brand trust	1	.477	.048	.827
	Parasocial interaction	1	10.958	.399	.529
Attitude toward Instagram	Brand trust	1	.001	.000	.993
	Parasocial interaction	1	13.737	.500	.481
Manipulation check	Brand trust	1	13.554	1.368	.245
	Parasocial interaction	1	3.201	.116	.734
Visits to Facebook	Brand trust	1	13.661	1.379	.243
	Parasocial interaction	1	2.469	.090	.765
Visits to Twitter	Brand trust	1	5.374	.543	.463
	Parasocial interaction	1	34.366	1.250	.266
Visits to Instagram	Brand trust	1	22.153	2.237	.138
	Parasocial interaction	1	61.715	2.245	.137
Facebook engagement	Brand trust	1	18.715	1.889	.173
	Parasocial interaction	1	37.330	1.358	.247
Twitter engagement	Brand trust	1	1.203	.121	.728
	Parasocial interaction	1	38.636	1.406	.239
Instagram engagement	Brand trust	1	12.927	1.305	.256
	Parasocial interaction	1	26.041	.947	.333
Source type	Brand trust	1	38.806	3.918	.051
	Parasocial interaction	1	6.501	.237	.628
Social media network	Brand trust	2	2.61	35.241	0.076
	Parasocial interaction	2	0.41	13.549	0.664

Table 8

Tests of Correlation with Control Variables

Control Variable	Sig.	Dependent Variables	
		Trust	Parasocial Interaction
	r	.164*	-0.001
Manipulation check	p	0.018	0.992
	r	.171*	.176*
Attitude toward Facebook	p	0.016	0.013
	r	0.124	0.118
Attitude toward Twitter	p	0.081	0.098
	r	0.113	.208**
Attitude toward Instagram	p	0.113	0.003
	r	0.112	0.113
Visits to Facebook	p	0.109	0.106
	r	0.076	0.071
Visits to Twitter	p	0.274	0.309
	r	0.108	0.121
Visits to Instagram	p	0.119	0.083
	r	0.057	.176*
Facebook engagement	p	0.411	0.011
	r	0.05	0.087
Twitter engagement	p	0.475	0.213
	r	0.022	0.109
Instagram engagement	p	0.756	0.119

Note: *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.
**Correlations is significant at the 0.01 level.

Table 9

Tukey Post-Hoc Analyses, Brand Trust in Social Media Networks

Social Media Networks	Mean Difference	Std. Error	p
Facebook, Twitter	-1.46086	0.61128	0.047*
Facebook, Instagram	-0.23864	0.69024	0.936
Twitter, Instagram	1.22222	0.71679	0.206

Note: *p<0.05